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INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5552  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2747  
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RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 1465  
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA 1375  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2480  
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 0266  
RUEHVK/AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK 0100  
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SUBJECT: Mongolian Court Convicts Boy Band Drug Smugglers

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¶1. (U) A Mongolian court convicted 13 persons accused of trafficking drugs smuggled in from China, sentencing three of the defendants to ten or more years in prison. The defendants included several Mongolian hip hop boy band stars, the son of a wealthy businessman, and several students. This is the most recent among a very few cases of drug-related convictions handed down by the Mongolian courts.

¶2. (SBU) Thirteen defendants were sentenced during a hearing on April 30 in the Bayanzurkh district court in Ulaanbaatar. Three of the defendants were convicted of an aggravated crime under Criminal Code Article 192.3: "the habitual illicit production, purchase, possession, transport, distribution or sale of drugs" for the smuggling, sale and distribution of small amounts of cannabis (apparently locally grown) and hashish purchased in Beijing and transported with the group by rail. (Note: Law enforcement authorities say most illegal drugs are smuggled by car across Mongolia's porous borders.) The remaining ten defendants were convicted of the lesser charge of purchasing and possession of drugs and were sentenced to six months in prison. Prosecutors successfully countered claims by some defendants that they were beaten and coerced into giving false statements. Five other boy band singers were under investigation, but their cases were previously dismissed under the amnesty law passed before Mongolia's 800th anniversary in July 2006.

¶3. (U) Judge Tsogtzandan, in handing down the sentences, told the defendants "Drugs, weapons and human trafficking are in worldwide focus and your crimes were very dangerous to society." The defendants were given ten days to appeal their sentences.

¶4. (U) Point of contact is RSO Craig Reistad, tel: (976 11) 329 1095.

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